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ABSTRACT

An ever-expanding body of social science research indicates that school is the single best avenue out of poverty, and educational achievement is now the most accurate predictor of a person's future economic success. Therefore, to help school districts, schools, parents, and community leaders improve the education of disadvantaged children, a wide range of school improvement recommendations is presented, most requiring little additional expenditure; and profiles of 23 effective schools (both public and private) and school programs around the country serving children in poverty are described for possible replication. Also included is demographic information on poor and minority children, and projections on their lifetime earnings based on their educational attainment. The objective of the "What Works" series is to provide the most useful, reliable, practical and research-supported information on what works in educating children. Among the recommendations made here concerning effective methods for improving education for disadvantaged children are the following: (1) schools must create an environment for achievement, provide disadvantaged students with early intervention and programs tailored to their needs, enlist parent participation, and ensure students have English proficiency; (2) parents and the community must instill in children the values they need to progress in school and life, monitor their educational progress, and invest especially in the education of the disadvantaged; and (3) local, State, and Federal governments must enact reforms to help disadvantaged students, support and encourage local programs for them, assess the results of these programs and hold school officials accountable. An extensive bibliography of 150 references is appended. (WS)

# What Works

# SCHOOLS THAT WORK

## Educating Disadvantaged Children





U.S. Department of Education

*What Works*

# SCHOOLS THAT WORK

## *Educating Disadvantaged Children*

U.S. Department of Education

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Generations of Americans who began life in the humblest of circumstances counted on our schools to help them and their children enjoy the personal and material blessings this Nation offers. America's schools have prepared our young people, whatever their origins or circumstances, for adult life and for the responsibilities of citizenship. We have an obligation to see to it that this ladder to success works as well for young people today as it did for those in our past.

The Department of Education has sought, under Secretary Bennett, to provide the American people with the most reliable and practical information on what works in educating our children. This book is the third in the Department of Education's "what works" series. The first two, What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning and Schools Without Drugs, have been praised by parents and educators for the useful, practical information and guidance they provide. Schools That Work: Educating Disadvantaged Children provides equally useful, practical information on effective methods for improving education for disadvantaged children.

This book explains how schools serving children in poverty can be strengthened, and it profiles schools that are providing a first-rate education to disadvantaged students. As with the earlier "what works" volumes, it is designed to give the American people the information they need to meet some of the most pressing problems facing our schools. I am pleased to recommend this book to every citizen concerned with the education of disadvantaged children.

Ronald Reagan

# INTRODUCTION

*Many of you are in college and many more in high school. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of these years of study. You must realize that doors of opportunity are opening now that were not opened to your mothers and fathers. The great challenge you face is to be ready to enter these doors. You must early discover what you are made for, and you must work indefatigably to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor.*

—Martin Luther King, Jr.
*Strength to Love*

**By William J. Bennett**
Secretary of Education

Americans have always believed that good schools make a difference. Our faith is that a good education can help children overcome even the most severe effects of poverty, and can provide our children with the traits of character and the shared knowledge and beliefs necessary for personal and economic success.

It is the purpose of this small book to show that our faith is justified. Good schools can save lives, and America is blessed with a number of such schools. There can and should be more. This book tells how such schools are made.

As Secretary of Education I have visited more than 70 schools throughout every part of the United States. Among them have been good schools in the poorest areas of Dallas, Cleveland, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Boston, Phoenix, and New York. These are schools that give their students what a good school must: a respect for and interest in learning and the habits and motivation necessary for success and achievement. Few students drop out of these schools. Most perform at or above grade level in reading and math; many go on to college. In these schools, children's family circumstances and their parents' lack of income or education do not hold them back.

The success of such schools is not a miracle. It is not a mystery. It is accomplished through the inspired effort of committed adults who adhere strictly to certain bedrock principles and sternly refuse to succumb to defeatism. Let us consider these principles.

First, these schools hold to the traditional American view that no immutable law dooms a child to failure simply because he or she is born into poverty. The principals and staff of these schools believe they *can* make a difference. They do not look at students and see broad socioeconomic categories. They see children. And they focus on those children, help get them on their feet, and point them the way up. Parents can be a great help in this effort, and many successful schools have enlisted help from disadvantaged parents. But disadvantaged parents, like all parents, vary in the degree to which they take an interest in their children's education. Nevertheless, when parents do not take an active interest, good schools do not take this as an excuse for failing to educate children.

It is not unusual for principals in these schools to know the name of every student. And in every one of these schools the administration and faculty make an effort to get responsible adults from throughout the community involved in the enterprise of education. This community of adults makes clear to disadvantaged students that, no matter who they are or where they come from, they can learn.

Second, these schools help children develop the qualities of character and respect for the principles of right and wrong that are prized by American society at large. The adults in these schools understand that the

ideals and knowledge they must communicate remain the same whether the students are rich or poor, black or white. Such schools do not deny or neglect differences in background and preparation; their students may be given even more structure, more homework, and more individual attention by teachers than students in other schools. And these students are not measured against lower standards. Their teachers know that disadvantaged students learn best when they are offered the best: clear standards of behavior, a curriculum that is rich and challenging, and vigorous teaching.

Finally, these good schools do not trade fundamentals for novelty, and they tend to avoid what is not tried and true. These schools are not disheartened by a history of low student performance, poor teaching skills, or high suspension rates. Instead they are inspired to act. They respond with more homework, better teachers, longer hours, tougher discipline, harder work, and greater encouragement to achieve. They set goals for students in precise and measurable terms. They teach the basics—reading, mathematics, science, writing—and communicate the essentials of an American common culture: history, literature, patriotism, and democratic principles. In other words, they provide an "intellectual work ethic" in what some people might disparagingly call "the old-fashioned way." And it works.

An ever-expanding body of social science research confirms that our faith in education is not misplaced. School has proven to be the single best avenue out of poverty, and educational achievement is now the most accurate predictor of a person's future economic success.

The United States, where schooling is the most powerful instrument of social mobility, deserves high marks for extending educational opportunities to all our citizens. We have spent generously for education, particularly for disadvantaged children. But expanded spending and access to education mean little if the quality of that education in a particular school is poor. Too many schools serving disadvantaged children are characterized by low test scores, poor achievement, lax discipline, and an inability to retain and graduate their students.

The notion that poverty and bad schools are inevitably linked is a prescription for inaction. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy of despair and it is flat-out wrong. Americans should not accept excuses for educational failure. Some of the reforms we need may, in some circumstances, require increased spending, but most will not. Too often we have spent money on the wrong things and have not achieved good results. The success of many schools profiled in this book springs from a focus on sound principles, not higher expenditures.

This book is designed to help parents, teachers, principals, community leaders, and state and local education authorities replicate in their own communities the success of outstand-

ing schools serving disadvantaged children. It also recommends measures the federal government can take to help improve education for disadvantaged students. It is a practical guide to the most reliable and significant current research and practice concerning the education of disadvantaged children.

In many disadvantaged communities, real improvement will take some doing. Schools may need more help, specialized instruction, improved textbooks, better teachers, and higher standards for graduation and promotion. Principals may need the administrative autonomy and authority to hire unusually qualified teachers with unconventional backgrounds, and to offer them the performance incentives that will get them to stay if they are successful and get them to leave if they are not. Parents may need to demand that information about the overall performance of their children's school be collected and publicized so that they can judge how well it is performing and, if necessary, choose another local school better suited to their children's needs. And in many places, as this book makes clear, the single greatest need may be for a principal or teacher of a certain character who combines the qualities of a great leader and a modest hero. Profiles of such people are contained in this book. If you read only a portion of this book, read these stories.

Many organizations, schools, and individuals from across the country provided information and recommendations that aided in the preparation of this book. Although it was not possible to include all the material we gathered, I wish to thank all those who generously offered their help. This book is a product of the Department of Education, but the success stories on which it is based are the result of the work of Americans throughout the nation.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Schools

1. Mobilize students, staff, and parents around a vision of a school in which all students can achieve.
2. Create an orderly and safe school environment by setting high standards for discipline and attendance.
3. Help students acquire the habits and attitudes necessary for progress in school and in later life.
4. Provide a challenging academic curriculum.
5. Tailor instructional strategies to the needs of disadvantaged children.
6. Help students with limited English proficiency become proficient and comfortable in the English language—speaking, reading, and writing—as soon as possible.
7. Focus early childhood programs on disadvantaged children to increase their chances for success.
8. Reach out to help parents take part in educating their children.

## Parents, Guardians, and Communities

9. Instill in children the values they need to progress in school and throughout life.
10. Demand the best from children and show this concern by supervising children's progress.
11. Get involved with the schools and with children's education outside school.
12. Invest in the education and future success of disadvantaged children.

## Local, State, and Federal Government

13. Ensure that education reforms make a difference for disadvantaged students.
14. Give local school officials sufficient authority to act quickly, decisively, and creatively to improve schools, and hold them accountable for results.
15. Assess the results of school practices, paying special attention to the impact of reform on disadvantaged students.
16. Support improved education for disadvantaged students through supplementary and compensatory programs, leadership, and research.

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**List of Profiles**

PART I:

# EDUCATING ALL OUR CHILDREN

## The Challenge of Educating Disadvantaged Children

Schools in low-income areas face a difficult challenge. Their students may come from communities with high rates of crime and drug use. Parents may have limited educational backgrounds. Often it is difficult to attract or retain good teachers. In some schools, children must overcome strong peer pressure to fail in school. In the worst instances, these schools must contend with gang violence, vandalism, a high incidence of teen pregnancy, and poor nutrition.

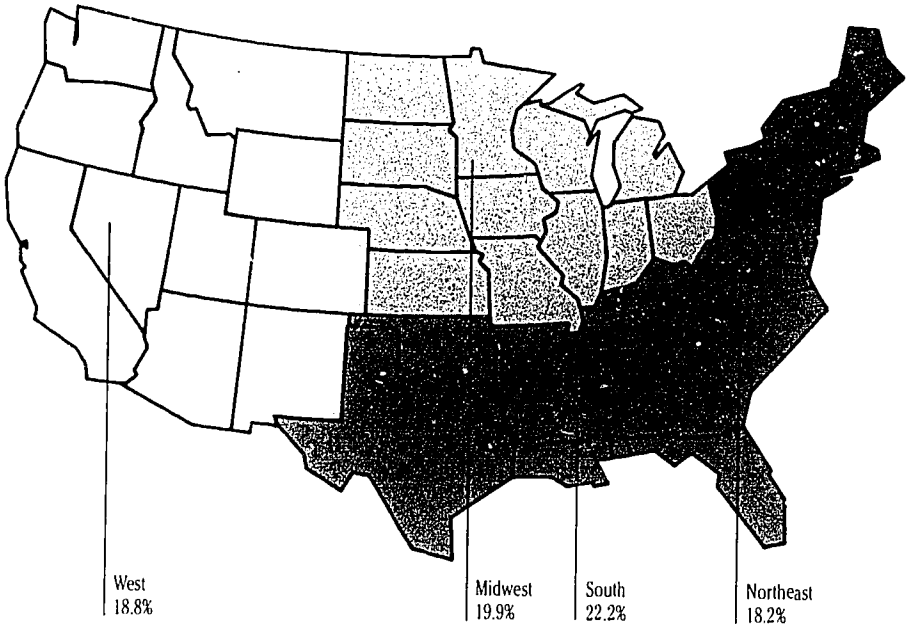
Although some children in even the most extreme circumstances overcome the obstacles of poverty and succeed in school, a great many do not. Dropout rates are more than three times higher for poor children than for affluent children. Nearly half of all poor children (47 percent) score in the bottom quarter on achievement tests, twice the rate of nonpoor children (19 percent).

Failure in school is associated with problems in other areas of life as well. High school boys with poor grades are more than six times as likely as boys earning above-average grades to be in trouble with the law. Low achievers are five times more likely than other students to become dependent on welfare.

In addition, some past trends in educational practice led to a general decline in performance and were particularly harmful to disadvantaged children. For example, replacing basic academic courses with excessive electives led to a weakening of achievement in core subjects. Many schools abandoned the requirement that students master basic academic skills and often provided "social" promotions for children who were unprepared to move on to the next level of learning. Perhaps most damaging of all was the loss of a consensus that the schools should teach standards of right and wrong, individual responsibility, and the requirements of good citizenship. As a result, the authority of school administrators and teachers was diminished.

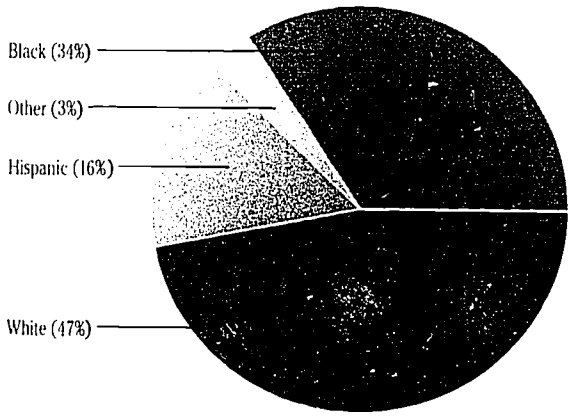
Over the past 20 years, a number of federal, state, and local programs have been created for the purpose of desegregation or to improve the educational performance of disadvantaged students. Most of them have been remedial or supplementary in nature. Although these programs have often proven to be useful, and have contributed to some narrowing of the achievement gap between poor and nonpoor students, the gap remains. Moreover, these programs have tended to draw attention away from the more fundamental schoolwide reforms that are needed. Research has shown that effective schools have instituted such schoolwide programs for disadvantaged students. These schools believe that disadvantaged children can succeed as well as other children, and they commit themselves to providing a curriculum that is challenging and enriching.

**Child Poverty Rate by Census Region**




Source: 1985 Current Population Survey

**Racial or Ethnic Composition of Children Living in Poverty**




Source: 1980 Census Data

## Every Community Has a Stake

Poverty is not limited to a few geographic areas or concentrated in a single ethnic group. Recent data show that the nation's 12.5 million poor children are broadly dispersed. In all regions about one-fifth of the children are poor. A substantial portion of poor children (45 percent) are in central cities, but more than half live in other metropolitan (27 percent) or rural areas (28 percent).

Poor children come from all racial and ethnic groups. Almost half are white, a third are black, and the rest are Hispanic or from other minority groups. Even though their total numbers are smaller, minority children are more likely than whites to live in poverty—about 4 out of 10 black and Hispanic children were in poor families in 1985.

Inadequate schooling costs our nation dearly, not only in terms of the dollars spent on later remediation and welfare dependency but also in terms of our national and individual spirit of self-reliance. A recent study estimated that dropouts from each high school class result in a loss of $68 billion in tax revenues. In addition, the entire community pays a price for poverty. For example, in 1985 Los Angeles spent $488 million in local government costs (police, courts, welfare, and health services) for dropouts.

Top executives of five of our leading corporations recently testified before Congress that the "quality of public schooling we provide to all our children, including disadvantaged children, will play a major role in the ability of the United States to develop a competitive economy and a strong society." As the Committee for Economic Development has stated, "It is a national tragedy that there are classrooms and even entire schools in which students are being prepared not for success in later life, but for failure."

Disadvantaged children stand to gain more from a first-rate education than other children. Disadvantaged children need the best that schools can offer. Our national interest, our character, and our pride require that schools serving disadvantaged children attain both equity and excellence.

## Education:
## A Way Out of Poverty

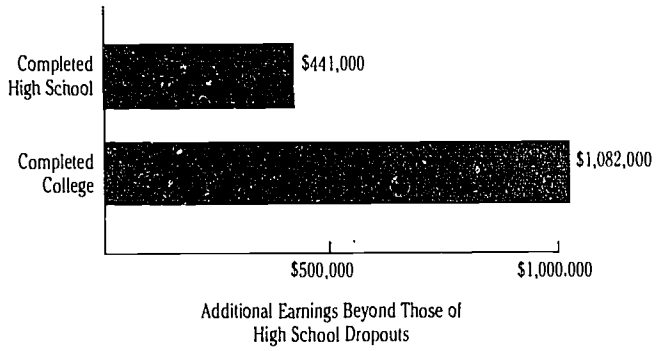
Americans have always believed that a good education is one of the surest ways to success. That belief is as true today for blacks, Hispanics, and Asians as it was for European immigrants in the early part of this century. For example, since 1940 as much as two-thirds of the income gain for young blacks is attributable to increases in years of schooling and improvement in the quality of the schools they attend. The benefits of education are colorblind.

For whites, blacks, and Hispanics, completing the last 2 years of high school reduces by about 60 percent the odds of being in poverty as an adult. Today the typical high school graduate will earn $441,000 more over a lifetime than a high school dropout, and a college graduate will earn $1,082,000 more.

A good elementary and secondary education is also more critical to the chances of going to college for students from low-income families than it is for other students. Among students from low-income backgrounds, those who perform well in school are nearly three times as likely to attend college as those who do not perform well.

Research shows that there are many other benefits of a good education, beyond the obvious economic ones. Educated persons have better health, increased community and civic involvement, and often enjoy greater benefits in other areas of life.

**Additional Lifetime Earnings from Completing High School and College**




SOURCE: Unpublished data from U.S. Census Bureau on lifetime earnings for men and women, 1979. Updated using the Consumer Price Index.

## *PART II:*

*There are schools in which educational standards and student results are high even though high proportions of their students are from poor backgrounds and have severe economic, social and personal problems. All students in these schools are expected to achieve and most of them do.*

—New York State Board of Regents
"Increasing High School Completion Rates: A Framework for State and Local Action"

# CREATING SCHOOLS THAT WORK

**Edison Primary School**
Dayton, Ohio

Edison Primary School, with its well-kept grounds, stands in stark contrast to its impoverished inner-city surroundings. Edison serves 570 children in grades one to three. Seventy percent are black, 30 percent are white, and 95 percent are from low-income families.

Many children who enter Edison suffer from malnutrition, intellectual understimulation, and a host of problems associated with poverty. To combat these problems, Brenda Lee, principal of Edison for the past five years, focuses "on the total development of the child." A sign in the foyer of Edison states her vision, "Edison Has No Nobodies and Everyone Is Somebody at Edison."

To create an effective school, Brenda Lee made some important changes.

- She defined the school's mission. Believing that "*all students can succeed*," Lee demands the best: children who "*speak fluently and precisely in complete sentences . . . have a solid foundation in the basic skills . . . and realize their own worth. . . . Knowing these things will enable them to fit in a world where achievement and success are expected.*"
- Lee strengthened the academic program. She used a combination of evaluation and professional peer pressure to replace incompetent teachers. She provided immediate remedial help to students who could not perform at their grade level. Students must demonstrate competency before they can be promoted. A schoolwide homework policy was established.
- Lee provided help for needy students. Clothing is collected and made available free to needy students. A local association of retired teachers donates money to a "Shoe Fund" to enable students to buy new shoes.
- She sought parental involvement. Lee first met parents informally at the bus stop or on the playground. After establishing trust, the school invited parents to special events and held workshops to teach them how to help their children achieve. At least 50 parents now volunteer their services at Edison each day.
- Lee encouraged community involvement. She sought and received outside volunteer help. High school students, student teachers from Wright State University, and retired teachers help tutor Edison students.
- She recognized student excellence. The school bulletin board features a picture and biography of the "Student of the Month." Special attention also goes to students who do a good deed and to those with perfect attendance. The principal personally recognizes outstanding work.

**Results:** The proportion of students performing at or above grade level has risen steadily from 40 percent in 1982-83 to 64 percent in 1985-86 in math, and from 65 percent in 1982-83 to 78 percent in 1985-86 in reading. Student attendance is now 95 percent.

Drawing upon the school's name, illuminated lights are used throughout the school to symbolize achievement and faith in the children's capacity to learn.

Schools, parents, community members, and state and local school district officials share responsibility for educating disadvantaged children. Each group must realize the importance of its actions in helping these children succeed in school.

- *Schools* have an obligation to provide all children—rich and poor—with a good education. Schools should not attempt to blame their failures on the children's parents, society's shortcomings, or insufficient resources. Schools should take responsibility for giving these children the best education available by upgrading the curriculum, improving instruction, and seeking support from parents and the wider school community.
- All *parents*, regardless of education and income level, exert an important influence on their children's motivations and behavior. By actions and words they teach children the importance of education, hard work, good behavior, and high aspirations. Parents and guardians of disadvantaged children should learn to do their utmost to help children succeed in school. In addition, *members of the community* should realize their stake in educating poor children. Community organizations, businesses, and colleges and universities should work with the schools to provide needed resources.
- *States and local school districts* should hold all schools, including those serving disadvantaged students, accountable for improved academic achievement. They should focus more on results, giving school staff the autonomy and support they need to devise the best means available for teaching their students.

The federal government complements and supports the efforts of schools, parents, communities, and states by providing funds for a variety of programs to aid in the education of disadvantaged children. To enhance their effectiveness, these programs should be targeted on those children most in need, foster greater accountability for results, and provide incentives for success.

This book recommends actions that each of these groups can take to improve the education of disadvantaged children. The recommendations are supported by research and grounded in experience. They come from two primary source materials:

- Research on effective schools. Much of this research, which laid the groundwork for the recent educational reform movement, was carried out in schools serving poor neighborhoods. Although the research methodology in some of these studies has been subject to debate, agreement has emerged on a broad set of factors that characterize effective schools.
- Practices of outstanding schools. There are many examples of successful schools that serve disadvantaged children. The U.S. Department of Education, public and private organizations, the print and broadcast media, and local governments have all recognized schools that are particularly effective in educating disadvantaged students. This book describes the practices of many of these schools.

**Hales Franciscan High School**
Chicago, Illinois

All the 300 students who attend Hales Franciscan High School are young black men from the inner city of Chicago. At Hales Franciscan they find a community of Franciscan friars and dedicated lay teachers who provide a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum.

Founded in 1945 as Corpus Christi High School, the school took on the mission—unique at that time for a Catholic school—of serving young black men. Its purpose has remained unchanged over the decades, despite the financial problems of subsidizing the education of students whose families cannot afford tuition payments. Fifty-five percent of the students' families are below the poverty level; most come from single-parent families.

Father Mario DiCicco, the school's principal, and the staff offer an academic and religious program aimed at helping students rise out of poverty through access to a college education.

- The curriculum offers few electives but requires four years of English, three years of math, three years of science, three years of history or social studies, two years of fine arts, and two years of a foreign language.
- Although admission is by examination, the school seeks to serve "ordinary students." Therefore, candidates with low scores may enter the school on a probationary basis if they attend summer school. Every teacher spends at least one hour a day tutoring students before and after school.
- The school stresses effective communication both in speech and in writing. English teachers require students to rewrite their papers several times for more effective communication.
- The school tells parents that students should spend at least two hours doing homework every night.
- The program of religious and moral instruction, recognizing that students come from diverse religious backgrounds, emphasizes moral judgment and social responsibility. An aim of the discipline program is to develop students' capacity for self-control.

**Results:** At least 90 percent of Hales Franciscan graduates go on to some form of postsecondary education every year. As many as three-quarters are admitted to 4-year colleges. Daily attendance averages 96 or 97 percent.

Father DiCicco says of the school building:

> *Its physical plant, inside and out, is a beautiful building, cared for and developed because it attempts to be a model of cleanliness and good order for the students. This is an amazing accomplishment in this neighborhood where so much can be vandalized and defaced and destroyed. For the most part the neighbors and gangs in the area respect this building as a symbol of great pride and great caring for the black community.*

**George Washington Preparatory High School**
Los Angeles, California

George Washington Preparatory High School is located in South Central Los Angeles; more than 65 percent of its students are from low-income families.

When George McKenna was appointed principal of Washington High, as it was then called, he said, "*No one should be an administrator who does not have commitment and vision.*" McKenna's vision was to transform a notoriously inferior school into a good school. Washington High was known for gang violence, drug use, vandalism, and low academic standards. In fact, the situation was so serious that more than half of the 1,800 students sought to be bused to other schools.

In revamping Washington's image, McKenna began with its name. He conceived of a prep school plan and persuaded district officials that the name George Washington Preparatory High School would symbolize a new academic excellence.

To ensure each student a high-quality education, McKenna made many changes.

- He required parents and students to sign a contract. Students had to agree to abide by school rules, adhere to a dress code, and complete all assignments. In addition to attending workshops on how to help their children achieve in school, parents agreed to visit the school at specified times.
- The school held training in nonviolence, modeled on the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Parents and their children signed a Contract for a Nonviolent Home, promising they would not physically or verbally abuse one another.
- McKenna reorganized a parents' advisory group that helped acquire funds for improving the school building. Parents also monitored student attendance.
- McKenna required teachers to assign homework and to make daily calls to the homes of students absent from their classes.
- He enforced a strict discipline code. "Hall sweeps" were held to find students who were not in their classes. Anti-graffiti squads were organized, with students scrubbing the walls in the school and on any houses adjacent to the school that had been defaced by students.

- He replaced 85 percent of the faculty, selecting new teachers with the assistance of parents and teachers.
- McKenna established remedial and tutoring programs in all subject areas. Any student receiving a D or an F was required to come in for tutoring on Saturday.
- He established magnet centers in mathematics, science, and communications arts with small classes and extra resources. Centers were open only to students who agreed to take college-preparatory courses.
- He required frequent testing in all subjects.

**Results:** George Washington Preparatory High School is now one of the safest schools in the district and one of the best. Seventy percent of its students go on to college. Absenteeism dropped from 33 percent in 1979-80 to less than 10 percent in 1985-86. Not only has the exodus of students ended, but there is now a waiting list, and school enrollment exceeds 2,800 students.

## EXERCISE LEADERSHIP

*Recommendation 1:*

### Mobilize students, staff, and parents around a vision of a school in which all students can achieve.

Many schools serving disadvantaged children project an image of neglect; talented teachers, good students, and outside resources go elsewhere. At best, their principals keep a lid on disorder and bad publicity; at worst, a chaotic atmosphere makes learning impossible.

It takes aggressive leadership to turn such schools around. It takes time, hard work, good instincts, commitment, energy, and the ability to inspire others, even when no one else believes the job can be done.

**Actions:** Administrators of low-performing schools serving disadvantaged students should take responsibility for improvement. They should:

- Set standards to revitalize the school's environment to make it orderly, safe, and academically demanding.

*A quality education provides more than basic survival skills; a quality education enab students to make intelligent choices, assume responsibility and deal openly and hon with the challenges of life.*

—Ralph Neal, Principal
Eastern High School
Washington, D.C.

- Insist on an excellent faculty. The principal should evaluate all staff members and improve or replace low-performing personnel. If poorly qualified teachers are hired for the school, the principal should refuse to accept them.
- Use symbols and public recognition to reinforce school goals and develop school pride. Meetings in parents' homes can create support for raised expectations. Campaigns to repair and repaint school buildings or to tidy up the grounds are ways to make the school a source of local pride. A dress code, school logo, and academic competitions are also ways to develop positive bonds between students and their school.
- Keep up the momentum. Evaluate progress, build on strengths, and correct weaknesses. Assessment procedures provide information for continuing educational improvement. The process of school improvement takes time and often passes through distinct stages. Establishing order and discipline, while a significant first step, is not enough. Successful school leaders move on to address academic achievement and then find ways to consolidate gains. In managing a changing school, the principal must stay on top of day-to-day operations, find ways to make new practices become routine, and maintain morale.

**Hine Junior High School**
Washington, D.C.

Hine Junior High School, located in the southeast area of the District of Columbia, enrolls 706 students. More than 60 percent of them come from low-income families. In 1982 graffiti-covered "Horrible Hine" was a school in chaos, and a community task force recommended that it be shut down. Enrollment had plummeted from 1,000 students to 296. Drugs were openly used, vandalism was rampant, and academic achievement poor. Instead of closing the school, the Board of Education appointed a new principal, Princess Whitfield, and gave her the task of turning the school around.

An empathetic leader with a keen sense of "how children feel," Whitfield directed all her energy toward making Hine an exemplary school. Her plan for action included strict discipline and security policies, active parental and community involvement, and the introduction of a rich curriculum that would hold the attention of all students. With an overriding sense of immediacy, Whitfield took action.

- The day before she took up her duties as principal, she toured the neighborhood where her students lived, introducing herself to students and parents. Whitfield continues to visit parents in their homes and encourages parents to visit the school.
- During her first day at Hine, she arranged for the outside walls of the school to be sandblasted, the fences mended, broken windows replaced, bathrooms repaired and painted, and classrooms cleaned. Assembling all her students, she looked them over and chose twenty who appeared to be troublemakers. She appointed them as monitors, responsible for helping keep order.
- She told the teachers: "*You must teach these children as if they were your own kids. If you can't do that, you have to go.*"
- She hired an aide to handle security. New measures included locking the bathrooms, with teachers holding the keys; closing the campus during the lunch hour; and maintaining only one entrance to the school. Students walk single-file in the halls and carry hall passes. Each visitor wears a badge. Students monitor the halls, bathrooms, cafeteria, and school yard.
- She enforced a strict discipline code. Any student caught with drugs is suspended. In-school suspension is used to punish other offenses. If a major disruption occurs, the principal immediately calls an assembly to remind students that this is "their school and learning cannot occur where there is confusion."
- She established a dress code. Whitfield tells her students, "*This is your first and most important job—dress the part.*"
- She upgraded the curriculum. It now includes courses in Asian art and literature, Latin (which Whitfield teaches), "Great Books," and fine arts. Students who are lagging academically behind their peers attend a special remedial program taught by the school's most capable teachers.

- She established numerous incentive programs, including an "Achiever's Row" and an attendance "Hall of Fame." School staff notify parents when their children are doing well in school.
- She established strong relationships with the community. Hine has more volunteers than any other school in the District of Columbia. The Concerned Young Black Man Program links under achievers with professionals from the black community.

**Results:** Over the past 5 years, school spirit has soared. Sixty percent of the students are achieving at or above grade level in reading and math. Attendance for teachers and students is high. Vandalism and drug use have virtually ceased. Students now take responsibility for their school. Perhaps most important is the feeling of hope and achievement that pervades the school.

*Recommendation 2:*

## Create an orderly and safe school environment by setting high standards for discipline and attendance.

Learning cannot occur in a disruptive environment. High-poverty schools, however, are more likely than others to be marked by violence, crime, and disruption.

- In 1986 the public rated drugs and discipline as the top problems facing the nation's schools. Low-income parents perceived these problems to be even more severe than did the general public.
- Research shows that children in schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students are twice as likely to be victims of serious crimes as other students. Their teachers are five times as likely to be victims of attacks requiring medical attention and three times as likely to be robbed.

Better discipline at school will create an orderly climate conducive to learning, improve motivation by reducing fear, and teach patterns of behavior necessary to succeed throughout life.

**Actions:** To maintain order and discipline in the school:

- Establish clear rules of conduct and enforce them fairly and firmly. Effective schools have written rules governing behavior in the classroom as well as on the school grounds. These rules should be consistently enforced. Students need to know in advance the consequences of breaking rules.
- Do not tolerate drug use.
- Set penalties that are appropriate to the misconduct involved. To eliminate graffiti and vandalism, for example, officials in some schools make a concerted effort to catch the offenders and then put them to work repairing the damage at times when other students will see them.

  Some kinds of punishment can inadvertently reward misbehavior; punishment of student absenteeism by suspension from school is an example. In such a situation, an in-school suspension program or weekend class in which students are supervised in academic work may be a far more appropriate penalty.

- Involve parents. Parents need to know when their children are violating school rules. For some children, the knowledge that their parents will be brought into the school if they misbehave will deter misconduct.

*When a man is about good works, parents see the good things happening and they say to their children: "You go there, and you will learn."*

—Joe Clark, Principal
Eastside High School
Paterson, New Jersey

- Work with law enforcement and other community officials to prevent disruption. These arrangements should be made clear to parents and students.
- Anticipate problems and deal with them before they have a chance to grow. Some schools plan and practice procedures for handling incidents such as false fire alarms. One elementary school principal had fire alarms painted with invisible dye that would adhere and could be detected on children's hands. Within a week, the false alarms had ceased.
- Recognize and promote good behavior by special praise. Pay attention to students who behave appropriately, rather than merely focusing on those who misbehave.
- Teach students self-discipline. Some schools that have trained students to mediate disputes among their peers have found a corresponding reduction in disruptive behavior. Others use students as monitors, or discuss with students what went wrong following a disruptive incident and help them plan how to keep such incidents from recurring.

**Rosa Sailes—**
**Teacher at Carver High School**
Chicago, Illinois

Rosa Sailes demands respect for this place called school. She gets it, which is one of the accomplishments most admired by fellow teachers at Carver High School. And she gets it, too, from the members of the Chicago Region PTA, who recently named Sailes one of the two public school teachers to win this year's Kate Maremont Foundation Award for dedication to teaching. Carver High's mostly black student population is drawn in part from the impoverished Altgeld Gardens public-housing development, where Sailes was born, just a few steps away from the schoolhouse doors.

If there's one thing Rosa Sailes has learned during her 17 years as a public schoolteacher, it is that students must not only be motivated to learn, but they must spend their time in an environment that makes learning possible.

> "When you come to Carver," explains Marcella Simmons, age 18, "you see her in the hall. You hear her hollering, and people say 'Watch out because that lady gives suspensions.'
>
> "When you get to know her as your teacher, you're surprised because she's really nice. She's not like any other teacher I've had because she's so much fun. She likes to argue with you, make you speak up. She gets mad when you don't remember something you did in your homework."

Sailes brings a seemingly endless supply of energy to her students, an uncommon enthusiasm for a high school class. In her sophomore English classes, she expands vocabulary, working on grammar and pulling difficult words out of the reading to be discussed in class. She sets the scene for a piece of American literature by establishing the historical context. She often marvels at the meaning her students find in the work of an author or poet.

She has her own way of handling those who use excuses to say that learning is not worth their while. "One year, I assigned *Macbeth*," Sailes explains. "We spent a lot of time on it in class. And then I had them do an exercise and realized they didn't know Macbeth from Macduff. I got mad. This one student, he says, 'Well, Mrs. Sailes, you know we can't understand that kind of stuff. We're underprivileged.' That really stuck in my mind. Underprivileged. Underprivileged? I finally decided well, hey, this is an opportunity. I am going to play this one off.

"So for the next few weeks, I talked down to them. I insulted them by giving them assignments far beneath their intelligence. When they realized what I was doing, they got angry. We had a little discussion in class. 'Well, you said you were underprivileged,' I told them, and nothing more had to be said."

Sailes's philosophy is simple: Teach each day so that all your students, no matter what their ability, can find something to hold onto, a nugget of wisdom or a kernel of information that they can carry out of the classroom to use later on.

"We talk about things honestly and straightforwardly," Sailes says. "They know I believe in them. They know I care. If they need someone to talk to, I'm around. If they need some direction, they know I'm here. But no matter if we're friendly, they know that if they don't do the work they'll get an F . . . *What I try to be is their anchor, a steady force that's always there.*"

—Adapted from the *Chicago Tribune*
March 3, 1987

*Recommendation 3:*

## Help students acquire the habits and attitudes necessary for progress in school and in later life.

Disadvantaged students may have limited contact with successful, well-educated adults. They may believe that life's rewards are based on luck rather than on hard work. They may be convinced that they cannot perform in school and peer pressure may persuade them never to try.

**Actions:** School leaders should:

- Encourage disadvantaged students to enter the learning arena and dare to compete in it. Principals and teachers should encourage these students to attribute their intellectual successes to ability and effort.
- Involve the entire staff in teaching values; do not confine the building of character to a specialized course.
- Set an example. For many youngsters, teachers and principals may be the most influential adults in their lives. Adult behavior, perhaps more than words, influences students. For example, a teacher who is punctual, diligent, and enthusiastic sets a standard for students. A teacher's willingness to discuss students' problems conveys the message that the students are valued.

*I talk to the students. I counsel them. My father was a minister, and his church was in a ghetto, so I have lived there. I told my students: The only way to get out is to get an education.*

—"Doc" Williams, former Principal
Cardozo High School
Washington, D.C.

- Teach responsibility by giving students opportunities for leadership. Older students with good grades and attendance can help teachers with clerical tasks, assist during small group work, or tutor other students. A student who is given some responsibility for maintaining order learns the value of self-control.
- Highlight themes of character in teaching. Examples from literature and history provide a wealth of material for shaping character: Abe Lincoln and Aesop's boy who cried wolf teach honesty; Harriet Tubman and Horatius at the bridge demonstrate courage; *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *A Christmas Carol* illustrate compassion and its opposite; *The Little Engine That Could* shows persistence in the face of adversity; and Booker T. Washington is an example of how hard work pays off.
- Assign challenging homework to instill habits of persistence and self-control. Teachers must mark student homework; research shows that unless homework is reviewed and corrected, it does little to improve learning.
- Teach children to reflect on future consequences of their actions. Enforce rules; punish inappropriate behavior. Discuss problems caused by irresponsible action—such as drug dependency, teenage pregnancy, or dropping out of school. Help students become aware of pressures to seek immediate pleasure without regard for their futures. Give them skills and moral support to resist.

**William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School**
New York City

The Garrison School, located in the South Bronx, is a 90-year-old institution that has recently been declared a city landmark. Throughout its history, Garrison has been a low-income neighborhood school with exceptionally high student achievement. Of the 843 students enrolled, all are from low-income families, with the majority from single-parent homes.

Carol Russo has been the principal of Garrison for the past 15 years. Stating that "I refuse to let the ghetto take over my school," Russo tries to "anticipate the problems before they happen." The school's philosophy is that every child has the ability to meet high levels of achievement and Russo works toward this end. Over the years she and her staff have designed a number of programs that stimulate the love of learning in their students.

Russo attributes the continuing academic success of Garrison to several factors.

- Teachers' expectations and levels of involvement have always been high, regardless of a changing student population.
- Reading is emphasized. The first 15 minutes in class are spent reading silently. All students receive 50 minutes of intensive reading instruction each day and participate in a rigorous classical reading program. Reading takes place everywhere—in the corridors and on stairwells, as well as in the classroom.
- Effective writing is stressed. A schoolwide writing program aims at enhancing the pupils' ability to understand the process of writing, as well as techniques for writing more effectively.
- Mathematics and science classes emphasize problem solving and "hands-on" experiments to teach students to apply the lessons they have learned.
- At the start of each day, students recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the national anthem. Courses in ethics and values stress the importance of character development and foster a positive approach toward learning.
- Students are tested frequently so that remedial help can begin right away.

**Results:** For the past 10 years, Garrison has ranked in the top 12 percent of all New York City schools in reading achievement.

When a student was asked what the rules were at Garrison School, he said, *"No fooling around, no messing around, no mistakes, and everybody hugs you."*

# RAISE ACADEMIC STANDARDS

*Recommendation 4:*

## Provide a challenging academic curriculum.

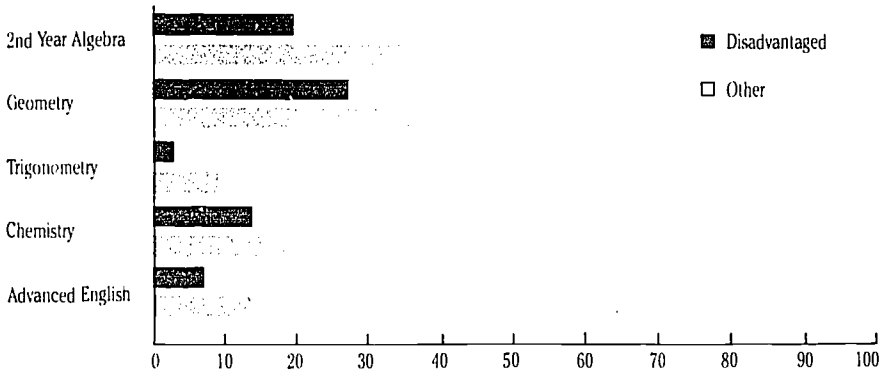
Disadvantaged children begin school with a slight deficit in achievement that tends to increase over time. Many disadvantaged children who fall behind never catch up. Research indicates that schools often limit the opportunities for these students: They are exposed to far less academic coursework than other students, and within the subjects they do take, they are not taught the reasoning skills needed to progress.

Too often the curriculum for disadvantaged students is fragmented and dull. Instead of reading stories, the children fill in worksheets. Rigid, lock-step curricula, broken into small increments of learning, may result in initial gains by children in early elementary school. But by the time they reach the later grades, these students cannot handle tasks that require more comprehensive knowledge and skills.

A 1987 study of mathematics education found that eighth grade math classes fell into distinct types. Students in regular classes were introduced to algebra and geometry. By contrast, students in remedial classes continued to study arithmetic, with little exposure to new materials. The study concluded that the assignment of students was often arbitrary and that there was considerable overlap in achievement scores among students in all types of classes.

**Course-Taking Patterns of 1982 High School Graduates, by Family Background**

[College-Preparatory Course Work]




SOURCE: High School and Beyond Study
U.S. Department of Education

**Actions:** While recognizing the special needs of disadvantaged students, schools should strive to realize the goal set forth in *A Nation at Risk*—that a common core of knowledge be imparted to all students. In meeting this goal, school leaders should:

- Create a rigorous academic curriculum that moves students quickly into challenging material rather than dwelling on repetitive instruction at the introductory level.
  —A reading program should provide a balance between teaching the skills to decode words and sentences and giving students opportunities to read. Reading should begin with phonics instruction, and at the earliest stages the words students learn should be placed within a significant context. Teachers should provide direct instruction in reading comprehension.
  —Writing instruction should teach students to think through what they are about to say, organize content, and revise and edit. It should provide students with frequent opportunities to write. Teachers should focus not only on the mechanics of writing (e.g., spelling, grammar) but also on ideas, expression, coherence, and structure.
  —The teaching of higher mathematics must not be indefinitely postponed on the grounds that it is too difficult. Frequently, math programs feature too much repetition of topics from year to year, with little discernible progress. As a result, arithmetic still dominates in junior high.
  —Science should be taught in the elementary grades, not simply by reading from textbooks but by "hands-on" science lessons that impart an active understanding.
- With school staff, set core curriculum objectives for all students. Subordinate commercial textbooks or specially funded programs to these objectives.
- Do not arbitrarily restrict student learning opportunities through rigid tracking. When students are assigned to classes based on their IQ or overall achievement levels and not reassigned as their performance changes, their chance for academic growth is curtailed.

In sum, the curriculum should be rigorous and inspiring: Students should stretch their imagination and minds through literature, the arts, and foreign languages; view their relationship in the world through history, geography, and civics; and enthusiastically pursue reading, writing, mathematics, and science. All students must become culturally literate so they can share in the common knowledge of our land.

*If we adjust class content up or down to the differences students come to us with, we will perpetuate those differences. If we expect all students to master a rich common core curriculum, there will still be differences, but they will be far narrower.*

—Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

**Kate Sullivan Elementary School**
Tallahassee, Florida

Kate Sullivan Elementary School enrolls 655 students from kindergarten through grade five. The student population of Sullivan has changed dramatically over the past five years with an influx of disadvantaged students from inner-city housing projects. Now 33 percent of the students are from low-income families.

To accommodate the diversity of the student body, principal Nancy Duden and her staff altered the teaching program to stimulate students and address individual needs. Their action-oriented strategies include:

- Creating the School Improvement Team (SIT), which functions as the major planning and decision-making body at Kate Sullivan. The team includes teachers from each instructional area as well as the lunchroom manager, building supervisor, bookkeeper, and a parent. One of its first actions was to abolish open space classrooms and move to self-contained classrooms.
- Writing individual behavior plans for students who exhibit behavior problems and improvement plans for students from kindergarten through grade three who indicate a need for extra academic help.
- Releasing teachers and the counselor from paperwork burdens by assigning the bulk of these chores to the assistant principal, primary resource teacher, and classroom aides. As a result, teachers focus on instruction and the counselor devotes more than 85 percent of her time to the students.
- Establishing flexible groupings of students within each classroom, with an option to group students between grade levels as needed. Teachers often work across grade levels in order to decide how students can best be taught.
- Emphasizing analytic skills. Students develop an understanding of concepts by first looking at concrete clues and then going on to an abstract level.
- Implementing a "life skills" series. Beginning in kindergarten, students work to develop skills. For example, students learn how to plan work and follow directions.
- Holding "Academic Olympiads" each October, a series of tests in each subject area, to help teachers assess skills. By the end of the school year, students must demonstrate a 70 percent mastery level in each subject area before they can be promoted. Students who do not achieve the mastery level must attend an intensive summer school program.
- Starting the "Nooner" program to draw parents in at lunch time on a monthly basis. Sixty-five percent of the parents volunteer their time at Sullivan, with volunteers logging in more than 8,000 hours in a single year.
- For parents who do not come to school, establishing an "SOS Care" program in which aides visit the home.

**Results:** Kate Sullivan School has a reputation for pursuing excellence with each child. Duden, known by her staff as a principal who will never give up on a child, is constantly evaluating programs and revising strategies to make sure each child is learning. Achievement is high; 75 percent of the students read at or above grade level, and 83 percent are at or above grade level in mathematics.

### Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring programs train students, often disadvantaged, to tutor their peers. Under adult supervision, the tutors learn to praise success and correct errors tactfully, to demonstrate a skill and then gradually allow the learner to take over. A 1982 study of tutoring programs showed that of the 52 studies that examined academic achievement, 45 demonstrated higher performance by students who were tutored than those in comparison groups.

Tutors learn as much as the children they teach, and tutors who are far behind academically gain even more. Tutoring gives them an incentive to review the basics; it also forces them to think about how they learn and to break tasks into manageable steps. In the words of one tutor who had been on the verge of dropping out of school before she entered the program, "It makes me feel good, proud of myself." Some of her tutees "are passing because I worked with them."

### Reciprocal Teaching

The practice of reciprocal teaching is demonstrating success in teaching reading comprehension to weak readers. In reciprocal teaching, students learn the skills that expert readers use in understanding a text. Included are these four strategies:

- Clarifying what they do not understand.
- Predicting what will come next in the text.
- Asking questions about content.
- Summarizing passages.

First, the teachers demonstrate the techniques, then the students take over, taking turns leading small group discussions of reading material. They learn to act as a teacher would, with their adult teacher serving as coach.

Some teachers initially resisted reciprocal teaching, skeptical about having their weak readers lead group discussions. However, they have come to see its value. Studies of reciprocal teaching show that the method has greatly increased comprehension by relying on the natural ability of children to explain things to each other.

## TAILOR INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

*Recommendation 5:*

### Tailor instructional strategies to the needs of disadvantaged children.

The quality of instruction within schools varies widely. Curricular priorities, textbooks, classroom environment, and the pacing and coverage of content—all are ingredients of sound instruction. Too often, disadvantaged children do not get their fair share of these ingredients. Yet it is within the power of school administrators and teachers to ensure that disadvantaged students receive top quality classroom instruction.

For example, a recent study of three school districts in one large metropolitan area found that students in nonminority schools averaged about 60 minutes a day on reading instruction, nearly twice the amount of time spent on reading in predominantly minority schools (37 minutes a day).

**Actions:** Instruction will be most effective for disadvantaged students when teachers take the following actions:

- Establish clear and consistent classroom procedures and monitor classroom activity to prevent misbehavior. Disadvantaged students cannot afford to lose time in instruction while the teacher is trying to establish order. Rules and routines should be set at the beginning of the year, thoroughly explained, and practiced until they become habit.
- Help students relate new information to what they already know.
- Question students frequently to ensure they understand the material. Teachers may need to encourage children to respond actively to questioning and classroom discussion rather than remaining passive. Research shows that when teachers ask questions that require children to think and analyze, the children gain in basic knowledge and skills and in analytic ability.
- Structure learning so that students have the opportunity to progress in small steps, but keep the pace brisk and make sure that the purpose of the lesson is not lost. Teachers should also demonstrate how to analyze a paragraph or solve a math problem, verbalizing their own thinking processes and guiding the students as they work through examples.
- Gradually expose students to independent work. Although disadvantaged students are initially most successful in highly structured work under direct supervision, they need to learn how to work independently. To make writing and silent reading successful, for example, teachers can circulate among students to offer assistance, or they can use student helpers or aides.
- Provide frequent and constructive evaluations. Research shows that low achievers need more encouragement than other students. Be certain that students know when and how to get help.

School administrators can support effective teaching if they:

- Increase the amount of time students spend actively engaged in learning. This means making more effective use of time in the classroom and making more time available for student learning. To improve the achievement of disadvantaged students, schools can extend learning time through a longer school day, Saturday classes, and by demanding homework assignments. In addition, an academically rigorous summer school can bolster achievement. Research has shown that the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged children generally widens over the summer months.
- Improve cooperation among teachers who teach the regular curriculum and the people who provide the many supplementary programs that often serve disadvantaged schools. Multiple programs that serve the same child often produce a fragmented learning experience. Schools must organize the content of these programs so that they are mutually supportive and provide a maximum amount of learning time.
- Limit class size to the extent practical. Smaller classes can provide disadvantaged students with the individual attention and help they need. However, positive effects will not occur unless teachers individualize their instructional practices to take advantage of the opportunities presented by smaller classes.
- Hold in-service training to improve instruction for disadvantaged children. In-service training can help teachers improve their own instructional styles and better recognize student needs. To be most effective, staff training should be schoolwide.

**Garfield Elementary School**
Phoenix, Arizona

Located in a declining inner-city neighborhood in Phoenix, Garfield Elementary enrolls 800 students, 99 percent of whom are from low-income families. The majority of the students are Hispanic, with 40 percent of the student body receiving bilingual instruction.

Camerino Lopez, principal of Garfield Elementary for the last 5 years, believes that "*Education is founded on respect for knowledge, and respect is always a two-way street.*" That is why Garfield's bilingual programs respect the value of a student's original language and culture, while emphasizing the need for the students to become proficient in English.

To ensure that all Garfield students have an opportunity to increase their abilities, Garfield includes the following programs:

- Kindergarten students receive the majority of instruction in their native language, with a gradual introduction of English. All students study English as a Second Language (ESL) each day.
- Bilingual kindergartners attend an English writing-to-read program, which uses an IBM computer with a digitized voice to help children learn to write, using the words that they know.
- In the transitional bilingual lab, all students in second through sixth grades receive intensive English instruction for 55 minutes each day for 10 weeks. Instruction covers 10 specific skill areas, with homework assigned daily. After 10 weeks, 80 percent of the students master the program and are able to use an English reader at the appropriate grade level.
- An intramural sports program was established to encourage social interaction between bilingual and other students.
- Many of Garfield's special activities reflect the culture of its bilingual students. For example, Las Posadas Christmas Pageant is a great success with the entire community.
- An adult English class was started for parents of bilingual students. In addition to learning English, parents learn the importance of having their children master English quickly.
- Parent and community participation is high. For example, the parent-teacher organization purchased 18 computers for individual classrooms to assist children in their English oral development. Many Phoenix businesses have partnerships with the school.

**Results:** Bilingual students are able to leave Garfield proficient in English. Garfield's attendance rate of 96 percent is the highest in the district. The February 1987 achievement scores reflect the effort of the school and students: sixth graders scored at grade level—at the 61st percentile in reading, 53d percentile in math, and 46th percentile in grammar.

## HELP STUDENTS LEARN ENGLISH

*Recommendation 6:*

### Help students with limited English proficiency become proficient and comfortable in the English language—speaking, reading, and writing—as soon as possible.

Many students from families that speak a language other than English have difficulty in school. It is estimated that between 1.2 and 1.7 million children from language-minority families have limited English proficiency and need special services in school. Of these children, about 60 percent are from low-income families.

Language deficiencies delay academic progress. For example, Hispanic students score far below non-Hispanic white students in reading achievement; the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that only 44 percent of Hispanic 9-year-olds had basic reading proficiency, compared with 72 percent of non-Hispanic white students.

Students who have limited English proficiency are much more likely to drop out of school. Dropout rates for language-minority students such as Hispanics and Indians are among the highest in American society. Forty-five percent of Mexican-American and Puerto Rican students who enter high school never finish, compared with 17 percent of non-Hispanic white students.

Schools must help these children develop full English competency, while respecting the children's native language and culture. Schools should make special efforts to get the chil parents involved in the education of their children.

**Actions:** In addition to the in tional practices found in effective schools, teachers of children with limite glish proficiency should also:

- Move as quickly as possible to enable the students to function in an environment where they have to use English to communicate (both listening and speaking).
- Relate English to concrete objects and events in the classroom.
- Ensure that students' use of their native language does not get in the way of learning English as quickly as possible.
  - —If English and the native language are being used in instruction, designate specific periods as times when English is primarily used.
  - —Avoid concurrent translation, in which the teacher asks a question or makes a statement in English and also in the children's native language. This practice may increase the children's difficulty in gaining English proficiency.

- Do not concentrate on correcting grammatical errors or mispronunciations when the children are first learning English. Corrections should be made later, when the children have gained more experience and skill.
- Do not prohibit or punish use of the children's native language, but encourage the children to use English through praise and rewards.
- The understanding of a new language develops more rapidly than the ability to speak and write it. Do not confuse children's failure to respond in English with a failure to understand it.
- Use knowledge of cultural differences to obtain maximum student participation. For example, in some cultures, students are not expected to speak up in class. Teachers can encourage recent immigrants from those countries to participate freely, while recognizing that the children are learning new cultural practices as well as a new language.

Parents of children with limited English proficiency play a key role in helping their children succeed in school. Parents need to appreciate the importance of having their children learn English for progress in school. Even if parents are not themselves proficient in English, they can expose their children to a variety of uses of English. Language-minority parents can—

- Communicate to the children that they are expected to learn English. Point out its importance for success in school and in gaining employment as adults.
- Create opportunities for the children to hear, read, and speak English in everyday activities. Watch English language television with the children; take them to a public library to check out books; and bring English language newspapers, magazines, and comic books into the house.
- Read to the children, in English or their native language, and listen to the children read. Research has shown considerable improvement in general language ability for children who are read to in any language they understand.

**New Parents As Teachers Project**
Missouri

Family education programs represent an approach to encourage and support parents in their role as their children's first and most important teachers. Missouri's program, known as the New Parents As Teachers Project (NPAT), began in 1981 and is currently available through every school district. Participation in the program is voluntary. Its participants, numbering some 34,000 families last year, represent all income levels and family types.

Interested parents enroll in the program, which provides continuing service from the third trimester of pregnancy until the child reaches age three. Services include (1) monthly visits to the home by parent educators trained in child development; (2) monthly group discussion meetings with other parents; and (3) a parent resource center, housed in a school, offering learning materials for families and facilities for child care.

**Results:** In 1985 an independent evaluation was conducted to assess the program's effects on participating children and their parents compared with a matched control group of nonparticipating families. The evaluation's findings show:

- NPAT children demonstrated greater intellectual and language development.
- NPAT children demonstrated significantly more aspects of positive social development, including the ability to cope and to get along with adults.
- NPAT parents were more knowledgeable about child-rearing practices and child development, including the use of constructive discipline.
- NPAT parents were more likely to rate their school districts as very responsive to their children's needs; the figure for NPAT parents was 55 percent, compared with 29 percent for control group parents.

## PROVIDE A GOOD BEGINNING

*Recommendation 7:*

### Focus early childhood programs on disadvantaged children to increase their chances for success.

High-quality preschool programs and programs that get parents involved early in their children's development may boost school performance of disadvantaged children.

Studies have shown that preschool can be the first step toward success for poor children in school and later in life. They may be less likely to fall behind in school, to require special education, or to drop out of school.

Other studies have shown, however, that the benefits of preschool dissipate if they are not reinforced by later school experiences. Preschool may help poor children, but it should be regarded only as a first step.

**Actions:** School systems that are considering early childhood programs should make serving poor children their top priority. The benefits of early childhood education have been documented only for children from low-income families.

In designing programs for preschoolers, schools must realize that younger children have needs that are different from those in the elementary grades. Research and experience suggest that young children may require—

- Greater attention to their broader social development—preschool must serve the child's social, as well as intellectual, development. Preschool should provide ample opportunity for children to initiate their own activities and to succeed in learning at their own pace, strengthening their sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

  At the same time preschool should provide structure for young children, with teachers who are firmly in control of the classroom. Preschool may also offer many children their first opportunity to learn to listen to directions, respect the rights of others, and work cooperatively in a group. Classroom activities should be structured to teach these valuable lessons.

- More play activities than are found in a regular elementary class—playtime provides an important opportunity for children to exercise their imaginations, develop their interests, and learn to get along with others—all under the watchful eye of the teacher. Even cleaning up after playtime can impart a lesson in responsibility.

School-sponsored family education programs can also give disadvantaged children a good start. Many school systems are setting up programs to work with parents and their young families as partners in learning. Family education programs should—

- Guide young parents in ways they can nurture their children's learning at home.
- Foster self-confidence by offering instruction that does not talk down to parents. These programs involve parents as full partners in their children's learning and development.
- Help to establish a strong bond between parents, children, and schools that will carry over into formal schooling.

School officials can involve new parents through home visits, offering them information on child development and early learning. They can welcome parents of preschoolers into their schools to get acquainted. Schools can set aside a section for parents in their libraries, with books on parenthood and books they can read aloud to their children. Activities such as these can be the first step in creating a link between poor families and school.

## Family Math

"Family Math" was developed by the University of California, Berkeley, in order to encourage more students, particularly minorities and females, to go on to advanced math. Designers of the program recognized that many parents would like to help their children, but they do not know how to begin.

A Family Math course gives parents and their children opportunities to engage in activities that reinforce and supplement the school mathematics curriculum. Classes are taught by a teacher, parent, or community worker in a school, church, or home, usually grouped by grade level. The course runs for 4 to 8 weeks, with once-a-week classes that last an hour or two, usually in the evening. The activities consist of:

- The development of problem-solving skills. Students and parents learn to look for patterns, draw pictures and diagrams, work backwards, guess at the answer and then check, and apply a host of other strategies when solving problems.
- An emphasis on working together. Talking about the activities not only opens the door for parents to help their children (and for children to help their parents) but adds a new dimension to the learning.
- An active "hands-on" approach, using inexpensive materials. Employing concrete objects such as blocks, beans, pennies, and toothpicks, children learn to understand the meaning of numbers and spatial concepts.
- An exposure to all of the topics of mathematics. These include geometry, measurement, probability, statistics, estimation, logical thinking, and the use of a calculator as well as numbers and arithmetic. In today's technological age, children should not be shortchanged by spending time only on arithmetic drill and practice.
- An emphasis on the importance of mathematics to future learning and work.

As of April 1986 more than 600 Family Math courses had been taught to 15,000 parents and their children.

## How Schools Can Increase Parents' Involvement

**Welcome New Students**
Welcome new students by taking their snapshots and posting them, along with a map showing their homes, on the bulletin board. After the display, the photos can be sent home to parents in "welcome folders."

**The Telephone Connection**
A phone call home does not have to turn into something a teacher avoids. Teachers who have mastered the art of a quick, polite and positive call can do it in two minutes or less: "Just wanted to let you know that Johnny's fighting has stopped" or "Sally's writing is improving."

**The State of the Class Message**
Send home individual class notes, prepared and delivered by students once a month or every two months to keep parents up-to-date on events in each class. Pepper this material with as many students' names as possible.

**Book and Toy Lending Library**
Ask for donations of books and toys from parents and local businesses. Parents can use this library to check out games and books for use at home.

**Raincoat and Boot Exchange**
Set up a day (perhaps tied to an Open House) for children or parents to drop off outgrown items and pick up wearable items from other homes. This exchange saves the parents money and brings them into the school.

**New Meeting Hours**
Adjust to the schedules of working parents and teachers at the end of a tiring day. Start the meeting at a conveniently early hour and bring some sandwich makings, so participants can be home at 8:30 instead of 10:30 p.m.

**Open House Time**
First impressions are often lasting. For many parents, Back-toSchool Night may be their first and only contact with the school during the year. Make it a night to remember:

- Have students prepare a special welcome message for parents to display outside the classroom.
- Let students make self-portraits and place them over their desk chairs. Ask parents to match their children's portraits to their desks.

**At-Home Meetings with Neighborhood Parents**
Ask a "host" parent to invite neighbors in to meet the school principal, guidance counselor, or teacher. An informal, at-home meeting helps build school-parent rapport. Ask members of the group to present ideas for home learning activities and to share ideas about child care when parents are away at work.

SOURCE: Adapted from Home and School Institute.

*Recommendation 8:*

## Reach out to help parents take part in educating their children.

Educators are sometimes quick to blame parents for their children's failure. In a recent poll only 41 percent of teachers gave parents positive marks for the role they play in public education. However, schools have not always done their part to reach out to help parents. The need for such aid is likely to be particularly strong in families with lower levels of education and with only one parent.

**Actions:** School staff members can provide parents with information and access if they:

- Convey the conviction that all students can learn.
- Provide clear information about school expectations to students and their parents. This information should include:
  - —The code of standards for students, covering the rules of conduct and penalties for misconduct. The code should be accompanied by a note for parents to sign and return, acknowledging that they understand the code.
  - —School academic standards and policies.
  - —Expectations for parental responsibilities. This understanding may take the form of a contract with parents in which they agree to support school policies on attendance and discipline and to monitor their children's homework, television viewing, and outside activities.
- Initiate regular contacts with parents concerning their children's performance and conduct and hold them accountable for their children's attendance. A computerized report card is insufficient; it should be supplemented by parent-teacher conferences, telephone calls, informal notes, and even home visits by school staff.
- Send home simple descriptions of the topics being covered in class to foster parent interest and stimulate parent-child conversations about school. To encourage discussions, teachers can give assignments that require children to ask questions of their parents and relatives.
- Provide encouragement and access. Many parents need encouragement to get involved. Schools can:
  - —Send home notes when children are doing well in school, as well as when problems arise.
  - —Open up the classroom for parent observation and hold social events at which parents and teachers can become acquainted in a friendly, informal atmosphere.
  - —Inform parents about how to reach the principal and the teacher.
  - —Hold parent conferences at hours convenient for working parents.

- Help parents assist their children with schoolwork. Many low-income parents may want to provide more direct academic help to their children, but those with less formal schooling may lack the confidence or the know-how. To help these parents, schools can:
  - —Establish teacher homework hotlines in which teachers are available for immediate information needs, or use other students to tutor their peers.
  - —Inform parents about specific learning activities they can do with their children.
  - —Make available inexpensive workbooks with projects to be done at home by children and their parents.
  - —Show parents the importance of everyday actions that emphasize the value of education, such as encouraging their children to read.
- Provide educational programs for parents. For example, some schools sponsor classes in how to be a more effective parent, hold courses in the basic skills for parents and their children, or make arrangements for parents without a high school degree to obtain their general educational development (GED) certificate.

**Chambers Elementary School**
East Cleveland, Ohio

*In this day and age, it is very rare for a school to give such love, understanding, caring, and educational value to all of its students. Chambers has achieved this goal far beyond any expectation imaginable.*

—A parent of two graduates

*When I was a student, the discipline at Chambers was ridiculous; the rules were too strict, so I thought. I thought that we always had so much work as elementary students. Why does Mr. Whelan try to learn all of our names? How dumb, I thought . . . Now what I really want to say is thank you . . . All that schoolwork prepared me to enter high school and leave there as a straight "A" student . . . All those rules taught me right from wrong . . . At Chambers I was special.*

—A former student

Letters like these often come to J. Joseph Whelan, who has been principal of Chambers Elementary School for 18 years. Calling the school and the community "my extended family," he maintains an atmosphere that combines affection with tough standards.

The results are impressive, despite the difficult circumstances that face the students at home. Among the 726 students, all of whom are black, three-quarters live in poverty and two-thirds are from single-parent families. Nevertheless, test scores at Chambers keep rising. Sixty-five percent of students score at or above grade level in reading, and 75 percent do so in math.

From the moment students enter the building in the morning, school is special. The children are required to be silent as they walk past the sign at the door that reads, "To Achieve Excellence, Think Excellence."

Each morning begins with Whelan reciting the Pledge of Allegiance over the public address system. After he finishes, each class sings a different patriotic song. The theme of patriotism is reinforced by a Hall of Presidents that contains pictures of every President, donated by community members, and a Freedom Shrine that displays photographs of historic American documents.

Each week 6 students receive a reward for good work: a Friday lunch with the principal, courtesy of McDonald's. Whelan invites the children to ask him personal questions, and they do. Often, they ask how old he is. He answers that question by giving his age in weeks, challenging them to figure it out.

Recognition for students' good work is frequent. The rewards range from a pencil that says "math superstar" to assemblies, written notes, stickers, certificates, and savings bonds for future education (presented by members of the community). A special honor, the Martin Luther King, Jr., Award, goes to a fifth or sixth grader who best exemplifies the qualities of leadership, citizenship, community involvement, and humanitarianism.

Parents are welcome in the school, and they say the principal is always available to help their children. Virtually every parent manages to attend special events at the school.

Because so many of the students are poor, Whelan makes special arrangements to help them out. For years he bought clothes for needy students with his own money and $20 donations from the teachers. When the local department store realized he was a principal, it adopted Chambers and now supplies clothing free of charge. The affluent Paul S. Gardiner School supplies Chambers with more than 200 pairs of mittens each year. In exchange, the Chambers choir sings at Gardiner at Christmas time.

Whelan also started a club for students from single-parent homes. The first meeting drew 150 students. The principal felt that many of these students felt inferior and he "wanted to dispel that myth."

The school's academic program encompasses the basics, such as an "essential skills" program in which 10 teachers tutor students in composition and math. It also includes special courses like "living social studies" and a Young Authors Club whose members write their own books. Teachers build their skills by taking advanced courses in their fields right at Chambers, at no cost, through a special partnership with a local college.

The school is a good neighbor to its community. A newsletter reminds parents that their children should walk on sidewalks, not lawns, on their way to and from school. Local police say they can always recognize Chambers students because they are helpful and they are not in trouble with the law.

# *WHAT PARENTS, GUARDIANS, AND COMMUNITIES CAN DO*

## Parents, Grandparents, and Teachers Can Set a High Standard

Born in Tularosa, New Mexico, Katherine Ortega was the daughter of a blacksmith; she was one of nine children. Spanish was her mother tongue; she did not learn English until she entered elementary school.

> My father taught me we were as good as anybody else, that we could accomplish anything we wanted .... I guess my father was ahead of his time. He encouraged all three of his daughters to make a living for themselves so we would never have to be dependent on anybody. He never told me I couldn't do the things my six brothers did.
>
> —Katherine Davalos Ortega
> 38th Treasurer of the United States

Leon Jenkins grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. His family lived on his mother's earnings as a domestic worker and on his grandmother's Social Security.

> [Grandma Garrett] had traditional moral values, the kind I think every kid should be exposed to. She taught us that a man takes care of his home. That means he doesn't beg his mama for her last dime because he doesn't want to go to work at McDonald's. [Grandma Garrett also taught the Jenkins children that] you're responsible for your acts. Whatever act you commit, you have to be prepared to suffer the consequences.
>
> —Leon Jenkins
> District Court Judge
> Detroit, Michigan

I went to school in Harlem and I remember my teachers in Junior High School 139. I knew Miss McGuire insisted that I respect the structure of a sentence and she explained to me what a sentence was. Those teachers had standards that we knew we had to meet ....

[None of them ever] asked whether I came from a broken home. They weren't social workers; they were teachers .... For five or six hours, five days a week, the universe was what was happening in that classroom .... There was respect for us that was indicated by the standards to which we were held and by the sense of achievement that we felt.

—Kenneth B. Clark
Psychologist

Under the purple-and-white flag of Boston Latin School, we were all united ...

The masters ... paid no attention to where we came from, to whether our parents worked in grocery stores or were State Street bankers. The only thing that counted was whether we were willing to do the work, the incessant work, it took to stay in this place ...

Whatever our backgrounds, we were in the school because we had shown we could do the work. The masters, therefore, expected at least that much of us, and that was why we came to expect even more from ourselves ...

—Nat Hentoff
Writer

## INSTILL VALUES

*Recommendation 9:*

### Instill in children the values they need to progress in school and throughout life.

All parents influence their children's success in school, no matter what their level of education or income. Their values, authority, and aspirations for their children strongly affect academic success.

- Research shows that the way parents influence children's motivation and behavior contributes at least as much to their children's academic performance as do such factors as their income, education, or marital status. The success in school of recent immigrants, for example, attests to the strength of family values and an emphasis on academic achievement.
- Among students from low-income families, the college-bound are more than twice as likely to say their parents expected them to attend college as are those who stop their education with a high school diploma.

**Actions:** Success in school takes hard work. It requires putting aside immediate pleasures until tasks are done and believing that long-term goals can be realized. To motivate children to do their best, parents and guardians should:

- Set examples through their own conduct and explain to their children the ideals underlying their actions. The importance of qualities such as honesty, courage, and persistence can also be dramatized by pointing out the negative consequences of mistakes or failing to live up to ideals.
- Relate personal experiences and family stories that reinforce the message that effort, persistence, and good character count.
- Cite the success of prominent leaders who rose from humble beginnings and the examples of ordinary people who have led exemplary lives. Find opportunities to have children come to know relatives, friends, or community members whose actions may serve as inspiration.
- Give children some responsibilities at home to foster self reliance, industriousness, resourcefulness, and routines for work.
- Teach children to plan ahead by requiring them to place school work and household chores before play. Parents should set a definite bedtime to help their children prepare for school.
- Praise good behavior and performance as well as correct misconduct.
- Encourage children to compete in school and to make the effort needed to succeed in their studies in the same way they might compete in sports. Parents should realize that their children may be under pressure from their peers *not* to do well in academics; strong support from parents and a belief in their own abilities will help the children resist pressure not to succeed in school.

**Parent Training Program**
Memphis, Tennessee

School-age children need structure at home and help with their school work. However, many parents lack the necessary self-confidence and skills to help their children succeed in school. It was for this reason that the Memphis City Schools sought to involve parents through an extensive training program.

The Parent Training Program was begun in 1985; 10 elementary schools with a combined enrollment of 7,500 students participate. The schools represent high-poverty areas where the majority of the students come from single-parent homes.

The program sponsors weekly parent workshops and other sessions held at schools and other convenient locations. The workshops are advertised by radio and through flyers sent to the homes.

Each workshop focuses on a specific issue, including such topics as:

- *Discipline*—Setting rules and enforcing them.
- *Time management*—Planning study time and an appropriate bedtime.
- *Planning and monitoring home study*—Providing a quiet place to do homework, knowing what work is expected of the children.
- *Building self-esteem*—Improving parents' self-concept and giving them confidence in handling their children.
- *Communication skills*—Holding conversations with children about learning.
- *Drug/alcohol abuse*—Recognizing the dangers of drug and alcohol use and what to do about it.
- *Nutrition*—Planning a healthful diet for the family.

The Parent Training Program has been very successful, with an average of 20 to 40 parents participating regularly in each school. Parents report a renewed sense of control over their children. Perhaps most important is the parents' personal satisfaction of being directly involved with the education of their children—giving a positive meaning to the belief that the home is the single most influential factor in the education of a child.

## SUPERVISE PROGRESS

*Recommendation 10:*

### Demand the best from children and show this concern by supervising children's progress.

Students who go unsupervised are more likely to become involved in theft, drugs, and other delinquent behavior. Lack of adult supervision in the home can lead to a host of problems at school: truancy, failure to complete homework, and social pathology.

The amount of time spent on studies is strongly related to academic performance. It is the single most important determinant of achievement. Effective use of time at home to supplement instruction at school helps children learn. Too often, those children who need to spend more time at home on academic activities actually spend less.

- Elementary schoolchildren who are low achievers are 10 times as likely as high achievers to have no books or to read no books at home.
- Studies of low achievers' families show that parents seldom converse with their children.
- Disadvantaged children are twice as likely as other students to watch more than three hours of television each day.

**Actions:** All parents, including the disadvantaged, can influence their children's behavior and academic success by taking the following actions:

- Demonstrate interest by asking their children to tell about what happened at school and to show their schoolwork.
- Establish family rules, such as setting curfews and restricting activities during the school week, that provide youngsters with structure and a guide to their actions.
- Expect to see homework assignments each day. Parents should question their children and school authorities if homework appears to be the exception, not the rule.
- Make effective use of leisure time at home. This includes:
  —Talking to children about their experiences. This helps them extract meaning from events, a skill important to success at school.
  —Restricting television viewing. Parents should limit the amount of time their children spend watching television and monitor their choice of programs.

- Encourage reading. Families that lack books at home should arrange for their children to go to a public library or have friends or relatives read to their children. Parents should require their children to spend a certain amount of time reading, rewarding them when they reach their goal. It is particularly important to have children read during their vacations so that they can hold onto the gains they have made during the school year.
- Make homework a top priority and reserve a time and place for doing it. In a study of successful students from low-income families in one California school district, observers noted that the parents regulated the children's television viewing and assigned chores around the house. In crowded homes, observers noted, the children even used the bathroom for study. The organization and structure in these children's lives apparently carried over into the classroom.
- Take advantage of learning opportunities at home by such activities as having children help adjust a recipe to serve various numbers of people, discussing with them why they did or did not like a television show, or comparing the prices of products in a grocery store.

**The Gaskins Home-School: Freedom Youth Academy**
Washington, D.C.

Dr. and Mrs. Gaskins of Washington, D.C., feel so strongly about education that 6 years ago they turned their home into a school for neighborhood children. Believing that "charity and civic responsibility begin at home," the Gaskins decided that they "wanted to help black children learn so they can have the same opportunities in life that other children have." Having worked for a tutoring service that charged students $35 an hour, Dr. Gaskins said, "I knew that most black families could not afford that service, so I decided to bring it to them for free."

The Gaskins, who have five children of their own and work full-time, had to readjust their already busy schedules in order to tutor students in their home. Nevertheless, they opened their school, Freedom Youth Academy, to all the children who applied.

The Academy is open Monday through Friday from 4 to 8 pm and on Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm. Initially there was no charge, but the Gaskins now ask those who are able to pay to contribute $5 to cover the cost of materials. The Gaskins tutor 75 students from grades kindergarten through twelve.

The Academy strives to "*blend goodness of character with intellectual skills.*" The Gaskins offer one-on-one tutoring in all subject areas. Their home-school has makeshift classrooms, upstairs and down, which include all the essentials —even computers.

The Gaskins attribute their success to their ability to motivate the children to learn and become more socially responsible. Parents enthusiastically note the progress of their children at the Academy. Not only do their children's achievement scores climb, but the students come to realize that learning can be fun.

For the Gaskins, the hard work and long hours are well worth the effort, for each student's success is their success. While admitting to being weary at times, Dr. Gaskins says, "*We want to reach as many minorities as we can and show them they can be proud by learning and doing well in school.*"

**Education Sunday**
San Diego, California

Walter Kudumu, a concerned parent, organized the Education Sunday program in San Diego, California. This program uses local churches to bring parents and community into the educational system.

Kudumu and school officials persuaded ministers in southeast San Diego to devote one Sunday in February to education. On Education Sunday, the ministers share their pulpit with educators who discuss how parents can be involved with their children's schooling. Said one educator, "To have a minister . . . say 'I support this effort, and I want you to support it' means something. [Parents] will act on the minister's word when they won't act on a note from school."

After the sermon, the church distributes parent pledge cards. Adults who sign these cards promise to do their utmost "to encourage learning and success of children in school" by the following actions:

- Encouraging children to learn by paying attention to them and showing an interest in their schoolwork.
- Spending at least a half-hour a day with children on reading, writing or conversation.
- Providing a quiet place for the children to study every night.
- Ensuring that the children receive a good night's sleep.
- Meeting periodically with their children's teachers.
- Encouraging children to complete homework assignments daily.
- Monitoring their children's attendance at school.

As a follow-up to Education Sunday, ministers recognize successful students from the pulpit. In addition, special meetings are held for parents, informing them where to go for such services as tutoring, counseling, health screening, or providing information on college admissions and financial aid.

Education Sunday has been enthusiastically received by the community. Several hundred parents and adults now participate, and the organizing committee continues to meet and expand project services.

## GET INVOLVED

*Recommendation 11:*

### Get involved with the schools and with children's education outside school.

Public opinion polls indicate that low-income parents are the least likely to give the nation's schools high marks and about 30 percent of low-income parents say they would send their children to a different public school if they had a choice. These parents, however, can improve their schools by becoming more effective advocates for their children's education.

Many parents are uncomfortable when dealing with formal institutions such as the schools. Parents may feel at a particular disadvantage when talking with school staff whose education exceeds their own, or they may be discouraged by their own experiences in school. Yet they should not let these feelings interfere with a concern for their children. To improve their children's education, parents should actively support the schools and work to improve them.

**Actions:** Parents can:

- Show support for the school and their children's teachers by:
  - —Getting their children to school on time, regularly, and with needed schoolwork and supplies.
  - —Supporting school disciplinary measures.
  - —Getting to know their children's teachers, attending school meetings, and contacting the school when they have a concern.
- Learn about the school's expectations and practices by talking directly with the principal and teachers, observing classrooms, and talking with other parents. Parents should look for such information as:
  - —The school's objectives for its students: academic content, skills to be mastered, and the amount of homework expected.
  - —The school's discipline policy, both what the rules are and the consequences for breaking them.
  - —Standards for testing, placing, and promoting children. Parents have the right to know about assessment procedures and their use in helping the children learn.
  - —Guidance in helping children with their homework.

The more parents know about the school, the better able they will be to help their children learn and to work to improve the school.

- Volunteer to assist school staff. Areas in which parents have provided invaluable help include:
  —Checking on attendance and tardiness.
  —Supervising students in the library, cafeteria, and on the playground.
  —Setting up telephone hotlines for homework and other purposes.
  —Improving school facilities and grounds.
- Join with other parents to improve the school. Often, a group of parents can be more effective than one person. Some parents work through an existing parent-teacher organization; others start with the parents of their children's friends or parents who live nearby.

Parents from all income levels have made a vast difference in their children's education. For example, they have:

—Built awareness of school drug problems and served as a catalyst for the adoption of strict school policies and effective prevention programs.
—Exerted pressure to remove ineffective principals, teachers, and superintendents. Some schools use parents as advisers in hiring teachers.
—Obtained publication of local school test scores in community newspapers.

**Business-Parent-School Partnerships**
Houston, Texas

In the Houston Independent School District (HISD) more than 83 percent of the students are disadvantaged. To increase support for the schools, HISD sponsors numerous programs that involve businesses, volunteer organizations, parent groups, and individuals. The successful partnerships in the HISD exemplify the city's commitment to providing all children with a high-quality education.

Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS), created in 1970, is a department of the school district. VIPS provides an umbrella for volunteers from businesses, churches, civic groups, universities, and high schools, coordinating services for their 20,000 volunteers in 235 Houston schools. More than 150 businesses have joined the program.

VIPS identifies groups interested in participating and matches their resources with the needs of individual schools. VIPS reaches out to each segment of the community with projects such as:

- *Business partnerships.* Tenneco, for example, is paired with Jefferson Davis High School. The company provides 130 tutors in the basic skills and 107 who serve as student mentors. Tenneco paid for 100 summer jobs for students, sent 100 students to a leadership training workshop, and gave 8 college scholarships.
- *VIPS—Seniors.* This program, which began in 1976, recruits retired persons to help in the schools. More than 1,000 older adults participate, usually working individually with a child who needs encouragement or tutoring.
- *VIPS—Kindergarten Screening.* This districtwide effort includes 2,000 volunteers who screen the 14,000 kindergartners in hearing, vision, language learning, and motor performance.
- *VIPS—Community Resource Bank.* This program engages classroom speakers at the request of the teachers. More than 100 businesses, 1,000 individuals, and 30 speakers bureaus participate.

The program attracts professionals from all local community agencies. The volunteers' contribution of time, money, and energy provides the schools with the support that tax dollars cannot buy.

## INVEST IN EDUCATION

*Recommendation 12:*

### Invest in the education and future success of disadvantaged children.

Community groups and schools share common concerns. The business community needs workers with basic skills and good work habits. Colleges also need adequately prepared students. Productive communities are built on the success of the schools.

Community members enhance the quality of education when they take an active interest in their schools. Community groups can help supplement material resources of schools serving the disadvantaged by in-kind and financial contributions. Perhaps even more important, individual members of the community can make these schools more effective by offering their personal support and time. Community involvement of all types has increased student aspirations and provided invaluable assistance to both the school staff and its students.

**Actions:** Communities that want to build successful alliances with schools should:

- Form partnerships with schools, tailored to match specific needs of the school with available community resources. Businesses, universities, and local governments can provide a wide range of resources—including funds, tutors, expertise, technological equipment, and facilities.
  —The promise of employment has become a reality in Boston for disadvantaged students who complete high school. The Boston Compact—a partnership between local businesses, universities, and the schools—has made a commitment to provide employment to Boston graduates. Some 365 companies have signed the compact's "priority hiring" pledge, and in the fall of 1984 some 600 graduates were hired in permanent jobs.
- Coordinate the activities of community-based service agencies with the schools to meet the broad range of educational and social needs of disadvantaged students.
  —Speaking on the need for a collaborative effort, Victor Herbert, Superintendent, New York City Dropout Prevention Program, advises:

  *One of the most successful ways to reduce dropouts is to surround young people with competent and caring adults—responsible people, who will encourage them to remain in school.*

  The New York City Dropout Prevention Program has contracted with community-based organizations that provide a team of four or five specialists for each school in the program. The specialists include social workers, attendance monitors, family outreach workers, remediation specialists, employment counselors, and family counselors.

- Enlist the assistance of volunteers to help disadvantaged children improve their mastery of subjects and skills. Volunteers offer their assistance to over 11,950 school districts nationwide; the value of their services is estimated at $655 million.
- Provide incentives to encourage students to recognize the long-term benefits of staying in school.
  —Eugene Lang, a New York businessman, established a program called "I Have a Dream," through which he offered to pay the college costs at a state or community college for all 61 sixth graders who graduated from his former elementary school in East Harlem. Five years later, 50 were still in school (10 have moved away), compared with a 40 percent dropout rate for other children in East Harlem. Other individuals and community groups have started similar programs.
- Recognize the academic accomplishments of local schools and students through the press, television, and radio. The best scholars can be publicly recognized in the same way that the best athletes are recognized.
- Take advantage of the central role that the churches play in the lives of many families in poor communities.

# *WHAT LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO*

**California**
California has enacted a comprehensive reform package and is tracking the effects of the reforms on disadvantaged students. All students, beginning with the graduating class of 1987, must study a core curriculum. To graduate from high school, a student must pass a district-established minimum competency test. State-convened committees of curriculum experts have developed standards that specify what should be covered in every grade and content area. Textbooks must match these standards. In 1985 the State Board of Education initially rejected all science and most mathematics texts on the grounds that they were insufficiently rigorous and gave publishers 6 months in which to upgrade the textbooks.

The state is initiating a special dropout prevention program to ensure that the higher standards do not cause greater attrition. Since passage of the 1983 reform law, the dropout rate appears to be declining.

**Jacksonville, Florida**
The Jacksonville School District in Florida eliminated "social" promotions, establishing a pupil progression plan with specific promotional standards as well as a competency testing program for each grade. The district has also provided additional support to meet these standards. For example, it established the "Blacks for Academic Success in Education" program designed to meet the needs of black students through activities such as special test preparation courses and the purchase of books on critical thinking skills. Students meet with advisers to discuss test results, academic progress, and future academic plans. These efforts are producing results. For example, the scores of black students on the Stanford Achievement Test rose from the 27th percentile in 1977-78 to the 44th percentile in 1985-86.

*Recommendation 13:*

## Ensure that education reforms make a difference for disadvantaged students.

The education reforms of the 1980's are mandating higher standards in areas such as the academic curriculum, promotion and graduation, and teacher certification and retention. It is critical that the benefits of these reforms reach all students, particularly the disadvantaged.

States and districts should demonstrate that excellence and equity go hand in hand by ensuring that tougher standards challenge every school child and by assisting schools that serve the disadvantaged to provide the extra help their students need. State and local leaders should focus on reforms to improve education results for the disadvantaged.

**Actions:** State and district leaders can help ensure a high-quality education for disadvantaged children by undertaking these actions:

- Set high standards for promotion and graduation and establish a core curriculum for all students that includes reading, writing, mathematics, history, science, and the arts. Develop assessment programs that focus not only on basic skills and minimum competencies but on analytic skills as well.
- Eliminate the "social" promotions that have been used to move some disadvantaged students through the system before they have acquired even the most rudimentary skills. Promotion must be based on the mastery of skills and concepts.
- Demand challenging, well-written reading materials for all students. Textbook adoption committees should select books for the disadvantaged that are engaging and coherent. Readability formulas that ignore content and style should not be the criterion for textbook selection. Publishers will change their offerings when states and local districts demand better textbooks.
- Adopt creative strategies for attracting, certifying, and retaining gifted, committed administrators and teachers. Many districts and schools serving disadvantaged students have a difficult time attracting and retaining good administrators and teachers. All too often they are assigned the least competent or least experienced teachers—they need the very best and most experienced. Innovative approaches to hiring and certification can help change this situation by bringing in employees who are committed and talented even if they may lack traditional teacher education course credits. In addition, education officials should adopt policies that make the salaries and working conditions of these schools competitive with those of other jurisdictions.

**Offering Choice in Community District 4**
New York, New York

Community School District 4 is located in an area known as Spanish Harlem in New York City. It is among the poorest of New York's community school districts, with about 82 percent of its students coming from low-income backgrounds.

District 4 has established a wide variety of schools organized around themes such as careers, math and science, and the performing arts. They are designed to offer families a choice in educating their children and to be small enough to provide individual attention to all students.

The district has eliminated school attendance areas for junior high school students. Instead, families are allowed to select the educational program that best meets their needs.

Most of the programs were started at the suggestion of a teacher who then became the first "school director." School directors establish the curriculum and recruit the teaching staff. They do not have tenure and can be removed from the position at any time.

To foster a collegial atmosphere, school directors share an office with the assistant director, if there is one, and the school secretary. The programs have no administrators or guidance counselors; the director and teachers assume these responsibilities.

**Results:** The results have been dramatic. Between 1973 and 1986 the percentage of students reading at grade level increased from 16 percent to 63 percent. The district now ranks 18th among New York's 32 community districts, compared with a ranking of 32 in 1973. Acceptances into New York City's specialized high schools have also increased. In 1985, 356 students were accepted into specialized schools, in contrast to only 15 acceptances in 1973.

## ENCOURAGE LOCAL AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

*Recommendation 14:*

### Give local school officials sufficient authority to act quickly, decisively, and creatively to improve schools, and hold them accountable for results.

State and district leaders should focus on setting achievement standards, while delegating responsibility for implementation to those who actually deliver services to children—district and school personnel. They should offer incentives for effective leadership and give parents some choice in selecting their children's public schools.

Administrators of districts and schools serving disadvantaged students must be able to make quick decisions and find creative solutions to pressing problems. They should be freed from unnecessary regulation and excessive paperwork to concentrate on the compelling instructional and disciplinary needs of their students.

**Actions:** States and local districts can:

- Establish firm policies governing student conduct that will give authority to local school officials. Low-performing districts may need to establish and enforce stringent discipline codes and to remove disruptive students. They also must be able to replace ineffective or incompetent teachers and administrators. State and district school officials should do all in their power to back up their front-line managers.
- Allow districts to design flexible programs for disadvantaged students by coordinating fragmented special programs. Where appropriate, states and districts can give local units the authority to consolidate categorical funds and inform school staff about effective ways to coordinate special programs within the school.

- Forge new partnerships between states and districts, and between districts and schools, in which the local unit assumes greater control over determining budget priorities, hiring staff, and setting and meeting instructional objectives. At the same time, the state or district provides incentives such as release time for staff and assesses progress, holding the local district or school accountable for results.
- Develop incentive or recognition programs for school performance. Several states offer special discretionary funds and public recognition to schools that improve student performance or maintain consistently high performance. These programs are designed to single out for special recognition schools that successfully serve low-income students.
- Establish magnet schools and other arrangements that allow children to cross school boundaries, and provide parental choice in selecting public schools or programs. Choice in public schools allows low-income families to take advantage of opportunities already available to wealthier families who can afford to relocate to find the best schools for their children.

Research has shown that disadvantaged students do well in magnet schools. Students in magnet schools tend to achieve more and to show more positive attitudes toward school and education. Disadvantaged students who have transferred to magnet schools also have better attendance, fewer discipline problems, and lower dropout rates.

**South Carolina**

South Carolina has enacted several reforms that use assessment results to take action against low-performing districts and programs and to reward schools that are highly successful:

- The State Board can declare districts to be "seriously impaired" if they show insufficient course offerings, low performance on achievement tests, poor teacher attendance, and low graduation rates. A state review committee visits the district and develops a plan and schedule for correcting the deficiencies. Seven of the eight districts classified as impaired since 1985 have successfully implemented the State Board review panel's recommendations.
- To continue to receive state funding, secondary vocational programs in the state must show that, over a 3-year period, at least 50 percent of their graduates who are "available" for employment are employed in an area related to their training.
- Schools with improved standardized test scores and increased student and teacher attendance are eligible to receive funds through the Governor's Award Schools Program. Last year 310 schools received between $3,700 and $81,000 each under the program.

**Boston Public Schools**
Boston, Massachusetts

Since 1981-82 Boston has released annual school profiles showing student performance in each of its public schools. Superintendent Laval Wilson sees the school profiles "as a means for promoting school accountability to parents, students and citizens, and also for enhancing communication with the school community."

Student data shown in the profiles include achievement test scores on the districtwide assessments and failure rates by race, and numbers on absenteeism, suspensions, and dropouts. Charts show trends in student performance from the previous 2 years to enable schools to compare themselves with their past performance. Other indicators include teacher attendance rates and per pupil expenditures. In addition, each principal summarizes the school's accomplishments during the past year and the major goals ahead.

*Recommendation 15:*

## Assess the results of school practices, paying special attention to the impact of reform on disadvantaged students.

States and districts must collect and publicize assessment results on a school-by-school basis. The results of assessment should be used as a way to identify problems, to recognize success, and to hold school and district administrators accountable. Public awareness of school performance provides an effective catalyst for change.

**Actions:** States and districts can take the following actions:

- Develop school profiles that include standardized test scores, graduation and attendance rates, course enrollments, awards, population characteristics, and other data.
- Use statewide testing to identify low-performing schools, set goals for their improvement, and target them for special assistance.
- Publicize performance data in clear English through the local press and other means.
- Encourage schools to develop the capacity to collect and analyze their own data, using this information to take responsibility for their own improvement.
- Conduct special studies to determine the impact of higher standards and other reforms on disadvantaged students. Offer technical assistance to school officials in adapting practices that show success.
- Hold school officials accountable for improving the achievement of disadvantaged students. When assessment shows a lack of progress, the local unit should be required to undertake a full review of its educational program for the disadvantaged and to take specific steps to improve. If a district or school shows an inability or unwillingness to change, states and districts must change leadership or even assume control.

**Charles Rice Elementary School**
Dallas, Texas

Of the 850 students who attend Charles Rice Elementary School, 99 percent are black and virtually all come from low-income families. Three years ago, as an alternative to busing, the school agreed under a court-ordered desegregation plan to focus on improving student performance. Specifically, the school set as its goal raising the reading scores of children in fourth through sixth grades by 10 percentile points each year. The principal and staff have exceeded that goal.

Louise Smith, principal of Rice for the last 3 years, is a "no-nonsense" person who runs her school much like a business—expecting children to learn and teachers to teach. According to Smith, "I want education to happen in a wonderful way for my boys and girls. My students know what the school expects of them . . . they rise to the challenge of 'Excellent Behavior, Excellent Academics.'"

A number of special programs at Rice help produce high student achievement.

- Chapter 1 students participate in a program entitled "A Prior," which prepares them for their regular classroom work. The program introduces them to curriculum materials that they might otherwise find difficult.
- The school provides extensive tutoring in reading and math. Teachers tutor daily after school, and there is a peer tutoring program as well. Children who fall behind attend an intensive, rigorous summer school.
- At an afterschool homework center, students can get help in completing their homework. The emphasis on homework teaches that "hard work pays off."
- The school has a special connection with music education. Rice offers an outstanding music program in strings, choir, piano, and band, along with special field trips to the opera and symphony.
- The community is involved in promoting the success of Rice students. A local architectural firm and several churches have adopted the school. Rice also participates in Eugene Lang's "I Have a Dream" program.

**Results:** Daily student attendance is 97 percent. Test scores show that students who enter Rice with good achievement leave with outstanding achievement. The vast majority of sixth graders perform at or above grade level: 73 percent in reading, 99 percent in language, and 87 percent in math.

*Recommendation 16:*

## Support improved education for disadvantaged students through supplementary and compensatory programs, leadership, and research.

The federal government has an obligation to extend educational opportunity to disadvantaged students. This important responsibility has been carried out through such programs as compensatory education, bilingual education, Indian education, school lunch, and Head Start. The federal government, however, provides only a small portion of the total funds spent to educate disadvantaged students. Therefore, federal programs alone cannot raise the achievement of these children in the absence of fundamental schoolwide reforms. Nonetheless, the federal government should take steps to ensure that its programs are as effective as possible.

**Actions:** The federal government should:

- Focus attention on the nation's responsibility to ensure a quality education for disadvantaged children. Schooling for the disadvantaged should be everyone's concern, and the federal government is in a central position to keep this concern alive and improvement efforts active.
- Maintain support for educational programs serving disadvantaged children, while working on ways to target services on the neediest. Funds must be directed on school districts and schools with the greatest concentration of disadvantaged students. These places are least able to serve the disadvantaged with their own resources.
- Give states and local districts greater discretion in adopting strategies that will be most effective with disadvantaged students. Officials and staff closest to the classroom are in the best position to determine instructional approaches appropriate for their students. Schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged children should be allowed to develop schoolwide improvement strategies. In bilingual education, schools should be permitted to use instructional strategies that are most effective in teaching students with limited English proficiency.
- Increase state and local district accountability for results. Promote success by recognizing local school districts and schools that show high performance and progress. Provide practical information about successful schools and the reasons for their success. Encourage states and districts to help improve ineffective programs.
- Encourage innovative practices that build upon effective schooling principles by underwriting demonstration projects. The federal government should support research on the education of the poor and evaluate the impact of federal programs in raising educational performance. The federal government should help disseminate accurate information on state educational performance, including the achievement of disadvantaged students.

**Carrizozo High School**
Carrizozo, New Mexico

Located in an isolated, sprawling ranching community with chronically high unemployment rates, Carrizozo High School has an enrollment of 101 students, 42 of whom are from low-income families. Sixty students are Hispanic, 40 white, and 1 black.

Prior to 1981 Carrizozo High suffered from severe absenteeism, vandalism, disciplinary problems, low test scores, and teacher apathy. In 1981 Dennis Sidebottom was appointed principal, bringing with him a determination to make Carrizozo a respected school—one "*that would make a family move to Carrizozo rather than away from the area.*"

Sidebottom took immediate action to impart his belief that all students can learn.

- The school adopted a new student attendance policy, along with a well-defined code of student conduct that clearly states the consequences of misbehavior.
- Carrizozo staff motivates students to excel. For example, eligible juniors and seniors are encouraged to enroll in freshman level courses at the nearest college, some 60 miles away.
- Teachers assist in making decisions concerning staff hiring and evaluation, curriculum planning, and student discipline. Class sizes have been reduced. A pupil-teacher ratio of 14:1 makes it easier for the staff to give students individual attention.
- Sidebottom is visible in the community, and the community actively supports the school. Articles in the local newspaper recognize the achievements of students and faculty. Local retail businesses engage students in a work-study program. Community members contribute to a college-vocational scholarship program which provides more than 30 scholarships ranging from $50 to $500.

**Results:** Ninety-seven percent of the students graduate from Carrizozo. Forty percent of the graduating seniors go on to some form of higher education. Achievement is up, with all grades scoring at or above grade level in reading and math.

*PART III:*

# *SUMMARY*

# SUMMARY

**This handbook is based on the following five principles, which are strongly supported by research and experience:**

- Children from all backgrounds can learn, if they are given the proper opportunity and encouragement.
- Equity and high standards go hand in hand. We will have equity for disadvantaged children only when they are offered a high quality education.
- We know how to create successful schools for the disadvantaged. It takes commitment, hard work, and imagination; but it can be done.
- Schools must be given the freedom to design the best possible programs for their students, while being held accountable for their performance.
- Parents—regardless of their income level or formal education—can help improve their children's achievement in school.

This book challenges all people involved with education to do more for disadvantaged children. **Principals can—**

- Inspire their students with a vision of excellence and develop practical plans for realizing this vision.
- Communicate their vision to everyone involved with the school—students, parents, school staff, and community members.
- Create a safe and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning. School goals must include standards for behavior as well as academic progress.
- Build and retain a talented staff that is committed to teaching all the children.

**Teachers and school administrators can—**

- Help instill the values and attitudes their students need for success in school and beyond. Schools must nurture a love of learning, a belief that hard work and persistence pay off, and the habits of good citizenship.
- Provide a challenging academic curriculum. Disadvantaged students need the best that school can offer. The subject matter they study should be coherent and interesting and enable them to develop the thinking and analytic skills they will need in later life.
- Employ a variety of techniques within the classroom to structure learning, reward progress, and move students on to independent work.

- Provide language-minority students whose English proficiency is limited with the special help they need to achieve English fluency.
- Give disadvantaged students a good start by getting the parents of young children involved in educational programs or by including disadvantaged children in preschool programs.
- Reach out to parents to help them take part in educating their children. Make them partners with the school by keeping them informed of the school's expectations and by making school personnel accessible to them.

**Parents and guardians can—**

- Instill in children the values they need to do well in school and throughout life. From the example they set, the stories they tell, and the way in which they speak to children, parents convey values. These values should prepare children to work hard in school and to keep up with their studies.
- Demand the best from their children and show they care by supervising their behavior. Parents can help their children learn by regulating leisure time and the amount of television watched and by encouraging children to read, converse, and keep up with their studies.
- Become involved with the schools. Parents must take responsibility for seeing whether the schools are expecting the most from their children and finding out how they can help the schools. The volunteer assistance of parents can go a long way toward increasing the effectiveness of schools.

Community groups must recognize their stake in educating disadvantaged children by investing in their education and future success. Community school partnerships, incentive programs, and many other activities will make a difference for these children.

**State and district education officials can—**

- Ensure that education reforms make a difference in the education of disadvantaged children. This includes setting high standards in schools that serve the disadvantaged and making sure that special help is available to meet student needs.
- Get the right principal. The right man or woman can change a poor school into a good school and can make a good school a great school. Without the right person—one with energy, vision, commitment, and compassion—there is no enterprise. A struggling school in a poor community requires a leader who believes success is possible and can make others believe it too.

- Develop policies that are tightly structured with respect to results and loosely structured with respect to means. Set high standards and demand accountability, but also offer schools the freedom to meet the needs of their students.
- Develop incentive programs that recognize exemplary schools and provide local units with discretionary funds for implementing long-term improvements.
- Provide parents with a choice in selecting their children's public schools by means of magnet schools and other arrangements.
- Publicize information on school performance, including such data as standardized test scores, graduation and attendance rates, course enrollments, awards, and population characteristics. Publishing school-by-school profiles helps make schools accountable to the taxpayers.
- Use statewide testing to identify low-performing schools, set goals for their improvement, and target them for special assist ance. When a school or district shows an inability to improve, take action to change leadership or even assume control.

State and local personnel bear the primary responsibility for education, but the federal government also plays a significant role in educating disadvantaged children. **The federal government should—**

- Continue to provide resources through programs such as compensatory education and education for students with limited English proficiency.
- Enact legislation that holds the schools accountable for spending federal funds effectively and for achieving results.
- Continue to make available the results of research for use by school personnel and the general public.
- Offer reliable information to groups and individuals who work to improve education for disadvantaged children.

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